

NJMC NEWS RELEASE

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**New Jersey
Meadowland
Commission**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Animal Visits, Family Science Nights, Nature Walks Highlight New Jersey Meadowlands Commission (NJMC) Winter-Spring 2013 Public Program Schedule

Hands on-On, Educational Workshops for All Ages Begin Sunday, Jan. 13

LYNDHURST, N.J. – The return of Family Science Nights, a visit from a live wolf, nature walks, a new Science Meets Music series, and a chance to see the stars in a portable planetarium and through a research-grade telescope are among the many highlights of the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission’s (NJMC) Winter-Spring 2013 schedule of educational programs for all ages at the Meadowlands Environment Center (MEC).

“The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission is pleased to offer a wide range of fun and educational programs for children, families and adults that stress the importance of environmental conservation and foster an interest in the sciences through engaging, hands-on workshops,” said Marcia Karrow, Executive Director of the NJMC. “The Commission invites everyone in the Meadowlands District and beyond to take advantage of these unique learning experiences.”

Stars of the Sky

The season kicks off on **Sunday, Jan. 13, at 1 p.m. with “Star Light,” Star Bright,”** an all ages introduction to the life cycles of stars, including why these celestial wonders shine so brightly for so long before leaving us in a blaze of glory. The program is led by Dr. John Sloan, Director of the NJMC’s William D. McDowell Observatory.

On **Wednesday, March 20, at 2 p.m.**, Dr. Sloan presents **“Out of This Solar System - Planets Orbiting Stars,”** which looks at some of these strange worlds beyond our solar system and whether they can support life as we know it. As part of the NJMC’s Family Science Nights series, on **Wednesday, April 24, at 6 p.m.**, children and parents have an opportunity to explore **“Astronomical Wonders”** in the MEC’s portable Star Lab planetarium. MEC educators present a program on the spring night sky and help participants create star charts and luminaria to take home.

The MEC's new **"Re-friend Your Telescope"** series, launched last year, continues in 2013. The program is designed for people who have personal telescopes but aren't quite sure how to use them. Participants bring their telescopes and the staff of the William D. McDowell Observatory helps get them up-and-running. They'll even assist people in cleaning their optics, though they cannot fix broken equipment. Sessions are limited to five people and are held from **7 to 9 p.m. on Fridays Jan. 18, Feb. 15, March 22, April 19 and May 17**. Cost for each session is \$5.

The observatory is open to the public for **free stargazing**, weather permitting, **every Monday and Wednesday year-round, excluding holidays**. **Hours vary by season. "Let's Talk Astronomy" learning sessions are held on Tuesday nights from 7 to 9 p.m.** Cost is \$15 for a month of classes.

Amazing Animals

A parade of animals and insects make their way to the MEC during the winter-spring season, giving children and adults a chance to learn about these fascinating creatures and meet some furry and not-so-furry friends up-close. On **Sunday, Feb. 10, at 1 p.m.**, Bergen County Zoological Park naturalist Carol Fusco brings bunnies, hedgehogs and other wildlife for **"Animals and Their Environment,"** a discussion on how mammals make their way in the world. Visitors can meet a live wolf at the **"Wolf Visions"** education program at **1 p.m. on Sunday, March 10**. Vincent Reo of Wolf Visions dispels myths and educates the public about the importance of wolves and their role in sustaining a balanced ecosystem.

Bees and butterflies buzz into the MEC in May and June. On **Saturday, May, 4 at 1 p.m.**, Tim Stewart, founder of Stewart's Apiaries in Vineland, talks about the prolific pollinators and healthy honey makers. Butterfly farmer Rick Mikula **on Saturday, June 8, at 1 p.m.**, accompanied by a variety of these beautiful species, discusses the life cycle of these ecologically important insects and how we can create backyard butterfly habitats.

Family Science Nights

The MEC is thrilled to begin its second year of Family Science Nights dedicated to bringing parents and children together to explore the wonders of science and nature around us. The educational fun begins on **Tuesday, Feb. 26, with "Eggs-ellent!"** Families can participate in egg-themed games and crafts and learn all about these edible wonders, including how large they can grow and how long they take to hatch.

MEC educators invite families of children and young adults with special learning needs to join them on **Thursday, March 7, for "Astounding Adaptations."** The program examines how animals and plants survive in the wild and include animal movement, protection and feeding simulations that include live animal interaction. This event is an extension of the MEC's MarshAccess program, which provides a full range of hands-on, classroom and field-based educational experiences for those with developmental, visual, hearing, mobility, learning/cognitive and age-related disabilities.

Following **“Astronomical Wonders”** on **Wednesday, April 24** (see description in the Stars in the Sky section at the top of this release), Family Science Nights concludes with a **“Mud Flat Adventure”** on **Tuesday, May 28**. Families use dip nets to catch shrimp, fish and other critters in the marsh in DeKorte Park, home of the MEC.

All Family Science Nights events are \$5 per person, \$4 for MEC members, and run from 6 to 8 p.m. While the programs are geared toward ages 6-12, parents are welcome to bring children of all ages.

Science Meets Music With Diane Moser

Celebrated jazz pianist and award-winning composer Diane Moser visits the MEC in April and May for a series of performances and interactive workshops that brings together music, math, astronomy and nature.

The first event, **“Music of the Spheres,”** is on **Wednesday, April 10, at 8 p.m.** and features Moser’s Composers Big Band performing works inspired by the environment and celestial bodies. The concert is preceded at 7:30 p.m. by a discussion with Moser. After the show, visitors are invited to observe the night sky at the William D. McDowell Observatory.

On **Saturday, May 11, at 8 p.m.,** Moser returns for **“The Birdsong Project,”** in which her trio performs compositions based on bird songs and the natural soundscape. Join Moser prior to the show at 7:30 p.m. for a talk on **“Deep Listening and Acoustic Ecology.”** Cost for the April 10 and May 11 performances are \$15, seniors \$10, MEC members \$8.

Moser also leads two creative workshops in which you’ll use natural sounds, measurements and modern technology to create original compositions. On **Saturday, April 20, and Sunday, April 21, at 1 p.m.,** bring musical instruments, or just your voice, for **“Pythagoras, Kepler, Math and Music.”** Participants convert measurements to musical intervals and create and upload sounds to the computer. The group will arrange the recorded sounds into an original composition. The April 20 session is for families; the April 21 program is for ages 9-18.

In **“Soundscapes and Birdsongs,”** you’re invited to bring your instruments, voices and recording devices. After walking DeKorte Park and recording and uploading the sounds of nature, participants create an original composition. This program takes place on **Saturday, May 18, and Sunday, May 19 at 1 p.m.** The Saturday program is for ages 9-18 and the Sunday session is geared toward families. The weekend workshops in April and May are \$5, MEC members \$4.

Famous Physicists, Ocean Dwellers, Art Classes and Nature Walks

Take a glimpse into the life and times of Albert Einstein on **Thursday, Jan. 24, at 2 p.m.** **“Einstein – The Man Behind the Science,”** includes a discussion about the revolutionary physicist’s education, philosophy and family life, and a collection of Einstein memorabilia. Join us on Valentine’s Day, **Thursday, Feb. 14, at 1 p.m. for “Love in the Ocean”** and learn where some of your favorite sea creatures find their mates.

Aspiring artists can use the environment as their muse during a pair of art classes. The beauty of the season is the inspiration for **“Midwinter Landscapes” on Saturday, Feb. 2, at 1 p.m.** The leisurely, three hour program is for teens and adults. Participants are guided through simple landscape composition and a gentle approach to watercolors and leave with a small, finished work capturing the essence of winter.

Adults can also attend **“Drawing Flowers with a Splash (of Color),” on Thursday, May, 9, from 2 to 5 p.m.** All experience levels can bring their own flowers or study ours. Cost for the above art workshops is \$15, MEC members \$10.

On **Saturday, March 23, from 1 to 3 p.m.**, kids ages 6-12 are invited to celebrate the arrival of the new season by using watercolor pencils to draw and paint images of DeKorte Park. **“Signs of Spring: Watercolor Painting for Kids,”** is \$10 per child, \$8 for MEC members.

The NJMC and Bergen County Audubon Society continue their **free bird walks in 2013 on the first Sunday and third Tuesday of every month at 10 a.m.** In addition, birding for beginners programs, in which walks are preceded by sessions on bird identification, optics and field guides, are scheduled for **1 p.m. on Sundays April 7, 14 and 21.**

Special free walks include the **“Great Backyard Bird Count Walk,” on Friday, Feb. 15, at 10 a.m., the 5th Annual Mother’s Day Walk on Sunday, May 12, at 10 a.m. and a DeKorte Park Plant Walk on Sunday, June 9 at 10 a.m.** All walks are two hours long.

Cost for Jan. 13, Jan. 24, Feb. 10, Feb. 14, March 10, March 20, May 4, and June 8 events are \$5, MEC members \$4.

The Meadowlands Environment Center is an NJMC facility operated by Ramapo College. For more information on Winter-Spring 2013 programs, and to register, visit www.njmeadowlands.gov/ec or pick up a registration form at the Environment Center, 2 DeKorte Park Plaza, Lyndhurst. For questions, call 201-460-8300.

Press Only:

For more information on Winter-Spring 2013 programs, and to arrange coverage, please contact Brian Aberback at 201-460-4619 or brian.aberback@njmeadowlands.gov.

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